

Certifications and Apostilles

A certification or legalization is generally necessary for documents which leave the United States. Common types of documents which require certification for acceptance into a foreign country include documents for an international adoption, diplomas issued by an American college or university and various types of records and contracts integral to a company which does business in a foreign country.

Please be advised that certifications can only be obtained for documents with an original signature of a valid:

- Massachusetts notary public
- justice of the peace
- city/town clerk, or assistant
- court clerk, or assistant or
- Registrar of Vital Records.

Photocopied signatures which appear on a document cannot be certified. It is important to identify which country will receive the records since different countries require different types of certification. The certification forms are basically the same; however, the name of the certificate which is attached to a document going to a country which is a signatory to the Hague Convention is known as an Apostille. The regular certifications and apostilles are available at a cost of six dollars (\$6.00) per signature to be certified.

An individual may receive the requisite certification by coming in person to the Commissions Section, Room 1719, One Ashburton Place, Boston, Massachusetts 02108, or by mailing the necessary documents to that address. A maximum of three documents will be done per customer at the counter while you wait. Four or more documents must be left with the commissions staff and picked up the next business day after 3pm. There will be no exceptions made.

Similarly, mailed requests are processed within two to three weeks. If mailing, please be sure to include the following information:

- The country of destination for the documents;
- A check made payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and,
- Please enclose a prepaid return envelope to have the documents returned to you.
- If you wish to have the documents returned via Federal Express, DHL, or any other express mail service, please enclose a prepaid return envelope with a billing account number.
- **Please be advised that we do not accept credit cards as a form of pre-payment for express mail services.**

A failure to provide all of the necessary information may result in a delay in the issuance of the certification.